

City of San José
Coyote Valley Specific Plan

Summary of Task Force Meeting
June 18, 2007
City Hall, Committee Rooms W118-120

Task Force Members Present

Co-Chair Councilmember Forrest Williams, Co-Chair Councilmember Nancy Pyle, Supervisor Don Gage, Chuck Butters, Eric Carruthers, Helen Chapman, Russ Danielson, Craige Edgerton, Melissa Hippard, Doreen Morgan, Chris Platten, Ken Saso, Steve Schott, Jr., and Neil Struthers.

Task Force Members Absent

Gladwyn D'Sousa, Pat Dando, Dan Hancock, Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins and Steve Speno.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Members Present

Michele Beasley (Greenbelt Alliance), Jane Mark (Santa Clara County Parks & Recreation), Melanie Richardson (Santa Clara Valley Water District), Brian Schmidt (Committee for Green Foothills), and Kerry Williams (Coyote Housing Group).

City Staff and Other Public Agencies Present

Anthony Drummond (Council District 2), Lee Wilcox (Council District 10), Rachael Gibson (Office of Supervisor Don Gage), Dave Mitchell (PRNS), Maria Angeles (Public Works), Stan Ketchum (PBCE), Susan Walsh (PBCE), Jared Hart (PBCE), Stefanie Hom (PBCE), and Perihan Ozdemir (PBCE).

Consultants Present

Doug Dahlin (Dahlin Group), Roger Shanks (Dahlin Group), Mike Josselyn (WRA), and Bill Wagner (HMH Engineers).

Community Members Present (Additional people were present; however, the names below only reflect individuals who identified themselves on the sign-up sheet.)

Nita Barve, Julie Ceballos, Henry Coletto, Roger Costa, Consuelo Crosby, Jo Crosby, Mini Damodaran, Richard DeSmet, Tonya Diamond, Robert Eltgroth, John Fosnaugh, Amie Frisch, Lorraine Gabbert, Joe Gorman, Dr. Grey Hayes, Janet Hebert, Paul Hebert, James Hill, Kathleen Hoffman, Dorri Jimenez, Verna Jigone, Michele Korpos, Joel Kushins, Jack Kuzia, Yusheng Kao, Rick Linquist, Joanne McFarlain, Mark Anthony Mederios, Daniel Mort, Rebecca Myers, Jean Meyers, Sabrine Nainar, Ngoc Nguyen, Daniel Olstein, Peter Rothschild, Kiley Russell, Esperanza Sanz, Christina Schell, Vinita Sherma, Sharon Simonson, Rudy Tamayo, Lowell Tan, Shelle Thomas, George Thomas Jr., Rich Truemptlet, Nicole Tindall, Diana Voigts, Tyler Watts, Don Weden, and Kim Weden.

1. Welcome

The meeting convened at approximately 5:30 p.m. with Co-Chair Councilmember Nancy Pyle welcoming everyone to the Coyote Valley Specific Plan (CVSP) Task Force meeting.

2. Acceptance of Meeting Summaries

Co-chair Councilmember Forrest Williams called for a motion to accept the May 21, 2007 Task Force Meeting, the May 2, 2007 Community Meeting, and the May 1, 2007 Technical Advisory Committee Meeting summaries. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Presentation Regarding the Santa Clara Valley Water District Plans for Laguna Seca.

Melanie Richardson, Water Supply Manager at Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD), indicated that SCVWD intends to use Laguna Seca for wetlands mitigation. The SCVWD must provide over 100-acres of wetlands for mitigation, and Laguna Seca provides over 40-acres. Locating ballfields in a wetland would not be a compatible use.

The Task Force provided the following comments and questions.

- What would Laguna Seca be used as mitigation for? *Wetland mitigation for stream maintenance projects.*
- Would this be stream maintenance be County-wide? *Yes.*
- Why is Coyote Valley doing mitigation for the County? *Melanie indicated that this area will be used for wetland mitigation to mitigate impacts in several areas of the County where the SCVWD is providing stream maintenance improvements. She also indicated that there is an agreement with the Coyote Valley Research Park (CVRP) that specifies what properties would be used for.*
- Why is Laguna Seca a better candidate for wetlands than other locations? *Ngoc Nguyen, with the SCVWD, indicated that part of the SCVWD's job is to do stream protection and flood control. The Laguna Seca area was a historic wetland area and has the appropriate*

hydrology. The adjacency to existing wetland areas makes this a very appropriate area to restore to wetland conditions.

- The City should try to help find other mitigation lands elsewhere in the City. *Melanie indicated it is possible, but they may not be as good as Laguna Seca. They would also need to re-negotiate a land transfer, and it would be time consuming.*
- The City should authorize staff to look at alternate sites for wetland mitigation. *John Hessler, with David J. Powers & Associates, indicated that finding other wetland mitigation sites is difficult. Sites such as Laguna Seca are rare; most sites are small and piecemeal.*
- How long has Laguna Seca been designated as wetland mitigation? *Water District staff would need to check on that.*
- This issue should have been brought to the Task Force earlier.
- The watershed is important to hydrology and wildlife. *Ngoc indicated that the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) has identified Laguna Seca as an important site for wetlands. Regulatory Agencies also support the restoration.*
- What is the purpose of the detention dam? *Ngoc indicated the detention dam is to separate Fisher Creek from the detention basin. There would be some overflow to allow flood water to bypass the detention basin. The detention dam is to retain high flow water to prevent flooding.*
- How often would there be standing water in the area? *Ngoc indicated the area is very shallow, and once excavated, water would be close to the surface much of the time. Once Coyote Valley Research Park (CVRP) creates a detention dam, the SCVWD would excavate more.*
- Would there be any time of the year that the Laguna Seca area would be able to be used for ballfields? *Ngoc indicated that due to the wetlands, there would not be appropriate times for ballfield use in Laguna Seca.*
- Has the SCVWD looked in the Greenbelt for mitigation of wetlands? *Yes. Ngoc indicated they need to restore 100 acres of wetlands, and they have looked at sites throughout the County.*
- Could part of Laguna Seca be used for wetlands, and the other part be used for ballfields? *No.*
- Laguna Seca is not a wetland now, but it is capable of being one? *Yes. Ngoc indicated it is currently classified as upland, but was historically a wetland and can be restored to a wetland.*
- Is the entire 44-acres needed for wetlands? *Yes. Ngoc indicated that the County needs 100-acres. They are trying to maximize the use of this one large site.*
- A lot of agencies use land in Coyote Valley for their own needs, but no one ever gives back.
- Having an additional buffer would help the nearby butterfly reserve.
- The CVSP process started with the environmental footprint. Past plans have not been concerned with the environment. The CVSP is a chance to do it right.
- Originally thought Laguna Seca would be a detention pond. The idea of it being wetlands is new.
- Should Coyote Valley bear the burden for the whole valley? *There needs to be some trade-offs.*
- Can wetlands be added to Fisher Creek or the lake? *Staff indicated they are already looking at further avoidance along Fisher Creek.*

- Staff needs to work with the SCVWD to see if they can work on any other ideas.
- What does the dark green area signify on the map included in the PowerPoint presentation? *Staff indicated that it is the historical wetlands area included in the Coyote Valley Research Park (CVRP) mitigation area.*
- Can the red area on the map be extended to the green area? *Ngoc indicated that area is part of the upland area. It is very expensive to excavate. The red area is an area that should be protected.*
- Is it possible to intensify usage of wetlands, to minimize the amount of acres needed? *No.*
- Suggested locating ballfields in the upland areas.
- If the SCVWD is already starting work on Laguna Seca, then what is the need for the Task Force's consent?

The public provided the following comments and questions:

- Bob Eltgroth indicated that there is a lot of grading is going on in Laguna Seca as part of the CVRP. What is happening there? *Staff indicated that one of the conditions of approval for the CVRP was to make improvements to Fisher Creek, which is the area that is currently being worked on.*

4. Discussion of Wildlife Connectivity Issues:

- a. Overview of CVSP Impacts on Wildlife (Dr. Mike Josselyn, Wetland Research Associates)**
- b. Presentation Regarding Wildlife Connectivity (Dr. Grey Hayes, Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve)**
- c. Task Force Questions and Discussion**

The Task Force provided the following questions and comments:

- Why would restoring Fisher Creek back to its original location improve wildlife connectivity? *Dr. Josselyn indicated the historic location of Fischer Creek is closer to the foothills, and the realignment would create a 200' long connection to the West Santa Cruz Mountains which could improve connectivity.*
- There would be development on both sides of Fisher Creek. It would block the east-west wildlife corridor. *Dr. Josselyn indicated Fisher Creek would be extended and the flood plain would be lowered. Land and aquatic species would have better connectivity.*
- There are barriers in the Greenbelt. *Dr. Josselyn indicated the open space east of Coyote Creek provides an important part of the north-south wildlife corridor. Any changes to the Greenbelt would need to be considered as a part of the CVSP.*
- Could Palm Avenue be used at a corridor? *Dr. Josselyn indicated there are opportunities for wildlife to cross at night at the intersections.*
- The culvert under U.S. 101 is a wildlife corridor opportunity.
- Has there been a study at Palm Avenue? *No.*
- Commended presenters on their expertise.
- How do you create a corridor that animals would use?

- The consultants only had access to approximately 50% of the properties located in the project area. There is not enough information since we do not know what is on the other properties. *Stan recommended submitting those comments as responses to the Draft EIR.*
- Tulare Hill is the easiest area to address. Should group wildlife crossings together.
- The restoration of Fisher Creek would restore the north-south connectivity.
- Do we have the opportunity to improve the corridors? *Yes.*
- How much work in the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) coincides with the CVSP? Is the HCP studying the CVSP? *Biological information and data has been confidentially shared by City staff between the two projects for use as appropriate. The nature of the HCP is very different, in that it is at a much more programmatic level for a very large landscape. While there is some overlap, the CVSP is not included as a “covered activity” in the HCP, and will only be considered in the cumulative sense.*
- If the CVSP is not considered under the HCP, that is a problem.
- The CVSP seems to be consistent with the HCP.
- After the Draft EIR comments are received, would there be a recirculation of the EIR that includes all the comments? *Stan indicated that the Draft EIR comments will be reviewed by the City, and they will review the comments to determine whether there is any need to re-circulate the EIR. The final EIR that is presented to the Planning Commission and City Council will include the responses to comments on the Draft EIR.*
- Isn't the EIR published with the Draft EIR comments, and then circulated for comments again? *No.*
- Did agencies look at wildlife corridors when the U.S. 101 was constructed? Was the corridor found to be adequate? Is there a document that analyzes that issue? *Dr. Josselyn indicated that it was not covered at that time.*

5. Public Comments

- Michele Korpos indicated that Coyote Valley could be an eco-system that gains worldwide recognition.
- Nicole Tindall, a DeAnza Environmental Studies student, indicated that development in Coyote Valley is not a good idea. It is not sustainable to use up resources. The City should redevelop areas that are currently being unused.
- John Fosnaugh, representing public, wildlife, and future generations, would like to preserve Coyote Valley as much as possible. Suggested to focus more on redevelopment of other parts of the City.
- Jo Crosby, a property owner in the Greenbelt, indicated that a lot of money is spent on restoring wetlands and wildlife, but the Greenbelt is still ignored. He does not believe that “open space increases real estate;” the value of his property has been reduced by 10%.
- Brian Schmidt, with the Committee for Green Foothills, indicated that the EIR consultants were not allowed access onto many parcels in the Coyote Valley. It is important that City consultants have access to all parcels to obtain unbiased information. If property owners who would benefit from the Plan do not allow access, then the Plan should wait.
- Jean Myers, with the Sierra Club, indicated that farming and wildlife can go together. Suggested to provide more corridors under streets and highways to encourage wildlife

movement. Laguna Seca in the winter has beautiful wildlife. Should also use lighting that is covered on the top to reduce light pollution into the sky.

- Rebecca Myers farms grapes on her property for wine, and has a lot of animals to help her with the grapes. We cannot live without animals. If we kill off animals, we would not be here.
- Kathleen Hoffman, with Save Coyote Valley, disagrees that the Plan incorporates natural elements of Coyote Valley. After the Plan is built-out, Coyote Valley would not be natural anymore. The Plan is taking away from the land. Wildlife is more important than ballfields. Cannot focus on saving just one species of animal, they are all connected.
- Henry Coletto, with the California Deer Association, indicated that when downtown San Jose was developing, there were a lot of burrowing owls that were never taken into consideration. Now the owls are gone. Wildlife has been cutoff in many locations throughout San Jose. We have the chance to protect Coyote Valley. The SCVWD is doing the right thing by protecting Laguna Seca as wetlands.
- Michele Beasley, with the Greenbelt Alliance, supports a functional wildlife corridor. The Draft EIR does not address the whole issue, and fails to acknowledge the environmental footprint.
- Joe Gorman, with the Center for Biological Diversity, indicated that global warming is affecting us now. The Draft EIR does not offer any mitigation for global warming.
- Mark Anthony Mederios, with Save Coyote Valley, indicated that the CVSP should include all mitigation for all impacts to Coyote Valley. Mitigation and protecting the environment is not a burden. If you cannot do the Plan right, then do not do it at all.
- Daniel Olstein, with the Nature Conservancy, wants the character of Coyote Valley to be protected. The Plan should maintain wildlife connectivity to the Santa Cruz Mountains. There are signs that are starting to show what wildlife movement looks like. Would like staff to analyze that information.
- Consuelo Crosby, a property owner in the Greenbelt, would like to know what is going on in the Greenbelt. Other plans in the area are going forward. She has land for sale, but cannot sell it. Would like staff to have a meeting with other Greenbelt property owners.

6. Adjourn

Co-chair Councilmembers Forrest Williams thanked everyone for coming and complimented the staff on their hard work.

He adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:45 p.m.

The next Task Force meeting will take place on August 13, 2007, from 5:00 to 8:30 p.m.